

“THEY FEED HERE AND LIVE THERE” BORDERWORK WITH WILDLIFE IN SLOVENIA’S NORTH-EAST CORNER

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This paper explores how wildlife’s purposeful migrations across the Hungarian-Slovenian border engenders relations between nonhumans and humans and stimulates people’s borderwork activities. Following a lead from Stef Jansen’s argument about the incompatibility of symmetrical and asymmetrical treatment of humans and nonhumans, the author performs a two-step analysis of animals’ involvement in borderwork. Keywords: *wildlife, international border, borderwork, farming, hunting, multispecies ethnography, anthropology of borders, actor-network theory, Goričko (Slovenia), Szlovén Rába-vidék (Hungary)*

Avtor v članku raziskuje vprašanje, kako namerno gibanje divjadi čez madžarsko-slovensko mejo ustvarja razmerja med ljudmi in neljudmi ter spodbuja človeška dejanja izdelovanja meje. Pri tem sledi argumentom Stefa Jansena o nezdružljivosti simetrične in asimetrične obravnave ljudi in neljudi, zato izvede temu ustrezno dvostopenjsko analizo vloge živali v izdelovanju meje. Ključne besede: *divjad, mednarodna meja, izdelovanje meje, kmetovanje, lov, večvrstna etnografija, antropologija mej, akter-mrežna teorija, Goričko (Slovenija), Slovensko Porabje (Madžarska)*

INTRODUCTION: ON A JOURNEY ACROSS THE BORDER

On April 4, 2018, a young farmer, the last remaining cattle breeder in his village in the middle of Slovenia’s agricultural region of Goričko, took my colleague and me on a road trip. Our destination was about 40 kilometers away, the Hungarian town of Lenti, and our goal to celebrate his birthday. Heading southwards along the edge of Goričko and just before entering Hungary, we picked up another young farmer, who introduced himself as the heir of a larger farm in his village. It was evening, so when we hit the road again, a roe deer jumped in front of the car. The driver stepped on the brakes, and the animal ran off; the conversation of the two farmers then immediately turned to wildlife and the damage it has recently made in their fields. Both farmers had just sown wheat, yet their work had been demolished. Traces in soil indicated that red deer trampled the first farmer’s land, whereas the second observed that wild boar had rooted about. During our conversation, we crossed the border. While driving the western Hungarian borderland, we encountered more animals, including a roe deer and a rabbit. This stimulated further talk about wildlife. It is common to meet animals at dusk in this area, and these occurrences function as starting points for such discussions.¹ Narrating big herbivores – such as red deer, roe deer, and wild boar – is also a common local practice even when not driving.²

¹ When writing this text, for example, on March 21, 2019, a web-magazine reported that police evidenced 11 cases of roadkill in Slovenia’s eastern region the previous day (Pomurec.com 2019). In an ethnographic interview, a farmer even suggested that I should examine the police statistics on roadkill, especially if I doubted farmers’ claims about the abundance of big game in the area.

² Slovenia is known as one of the most forested countries in Europe, with a forest cover of 58.5 % (SFS

Farmers' narratives about big game are, in a way, narratives about the state. For example, farmers regularly compare themselves with hunters, saying that the latter possess all the power, which manifests itself in hunters' autonomy concerning the estimation of animal-made damage and determining the numbers of animals to be culled. In this arrangement, farmers feel subordinate to hunters. Such a comparison invokes the state because, according to farmers, it is the state that privileges one group's interests over others. This was apparent during our car drive, during which the two commenters expressed anger, feeling as if they were left to the goodwill of hunters, who estimated and covered the damage to their fields. Nevertheless, it is the state that allows such arrangements, the two farmers insisted. Overly low cull numbers and low retributions for inflicted damage proves that the state is careless about the farming profession, whose significance, farmers often claim, is rapidly fading. This situation is one manifestation of “circulation of state-as-fantasy in everyday life” (Reeves 2014: 13) in the case of Goričko.

In conversations such as the one we had in the car, narrating wildlife often leads towards comments on the Slovenian state, which farmers criticize for marginalizing agriculture. Since Goričko is a borderland, such talks often also invoke the neighboring state. After reflecting on the national policies in the region, Hungary also became a topic of conversation. I was instructed that arrangements regarding wildlife are even worse there than they are in Slovenia. Our co-driver once hit a red deer doe in Hungary, and when a hunter arrived to observe the accident, *he didn't ask if someone got hurt, but just who was driving, who was at fault*. Furthermore, he explained, while red deer are innumerable in Hungary, culling as a form of wildlife population control is virtually nonexistent. He even showed pity for the neighbors, saying that Hungarians do not have the option to insure their vehicles against animal-made damage because the animals are so numerous in the area. In this narrative, it is the Hungarian state that implements a policy that brings wildlife and different groups of people into specific, unwelcome relationships.

I find these observations important for understanding farmers' perception of their livelihood in the periphery of the state. They are also intriguing because by narrating wildlife, farmers in Goričko also narrate the state. Moreover, they bring forth one particular attribute of the state: its border. The border is invoked in the juxtaposition of relationships between humans and wildlife in neighboring states, with the border marking the difference. Still, if we follow the lead of anthropological literature that understands states and borders as gaining mental shapes, meanings and materializations through the practical engagements of citizens (Green 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Reeves 2014), there is more to the issue of how animals stimulate the way humans imagine and practice the state and its

2019). Wildlife is thus present in people's lives in many parts of the country. However, its presence from area to area differs and, as this paper demonstrates, it is in locally marked and reflected upon in diverse ways. Nonetheless, the borderlands between Slovenia and Hungary have become locally (but much less nationally, where talk about wolves and bears dominates) notorious for its abundance of big herbivores.

border. In Goričko, local inhabitants indeed often talk about wildlife and, consequently, about states and borders. However, animals are first and foremost living creatures with specific habits that physically mingle in inhabitants' lives in diverse ways. More specifically, animals' involvement in daily life happens when they cross the border. People observe that big herbivores purposefully move across the border to take advantage of uneven ecologies on the border's respective sides (cf. Cunningham 2016). Consequently, they continuously bring the border into human consciousness, conversations, narratives, and action.

As I present in this paper, in Goričko – and especially in villages closer to the border – narratives about wildlife bring forth not only farmers' problems but also the state border given that animals supposedly cross it. As I demonstrate, they have a good reason for this. Their purposeful movement, therefore, forces me to treat them as actors, who, just like humans, have an autonomous agency that engenders human-nonhuman relations around the border. In this location, hence, big game is a significant *actant* – an entity made to act by an external agency, whose own agency yet makes other actors do things (Latour 2005: 54–55). What its agency does, however, is stimulate people to perform *borderwork* – “practices that produce, reproduce or modify degrees of borderness” (Jansen 2013: 23) and the “messy, contested, and often intensely social business of making territory ‘integral’” (Reeves 2014: 6). Recognizing these two postulates – actants and borderwork, however, leads me into a contradiction: animals have an agency that should be treated on an *equal* level with that of humans within the entanglements they jointly create. However, humans also perform activities that recognize borders as borders, which animals do not, which is why the two of them are *unequal*. This contradiction was already addressed by Stef Jansen (2013), who argued that an analyst cannot treat nonhuman actants and humans *simultaneously* as equals (symmetrical) and non-equals (asymmetrical). Instead, the analyst has to choose between the two options or carry out separate analyses. Jansen deals with non-living actants, whereas I deal with living nonhumans; however, I confirm his proposition.

This paper explores the modes of wildlife's involvement in human life so that it *separately* addresses two questions: 1. Why do animals cross the border, and which actants are positioned in relation to each other as a result of these actions? 2. In what ways do people acknowledge the border when responding to animals' actions? First, however, I introduce the area in question by examining the historical modalities of its borders.

BORDER EFFECTS IN THE HISTORICAL GORIČKO

In the popular Slovenian imagination, the map of Slovenia resembles a chicken (running eastwards). The area of Goričko, in this case, covers what would be the brain of the chicken's head. With a bit of imagination, and with some help from cubism, one can turn the chicken's brain into a square. The length of the square's sides is around 25 kilometers. Its left vertical side thus represents the borderline with Austria, the upper horizontal and

right vertical sides the borderline with Hungary, and the bottom horizontal side is where the hilly landscape of Goričko turns into a plain of Ravensko. If we divide the square into nine equal squares (3 x 3), we can place my fieldwork area into the four upper right squares, i.e., from the center eastwards and northwards towards the Slovenian-Hungarian border.³

Present-day Goričko is a territory almost surrounded by national borders. Different parts of the present border, however, were established in different periods. The border with Austria – the left vertical side of our square – has roots that extend into the 12th century (Klemenčič 1991: 109). During the period of Austria-Hungary (1867–1918), it was only an internal border in the dual monarchy, making what has later become known as Goričko part of the Hungarian Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen. After the fall of the dual monarchy, this border marked the boundary between Austria and Yugoslavia.⁴ The layout of this part of the border has thus not changed even though the political entities to which Goričko belonged did change over time, with the last one taking place when Slovenia declared its independence in 1991. In other words, changes of this border's essence have dramatically shifted "the ground underneath people's feet" (Green 2013: 345).

The story is quite different from the upper horizontal and right vertical sides of our square. This part of the border was defined only between 1919 and 1924 (Klemenčič 1991), when the collapse of Austria-Hungary ushered in negotiations about the border between Hungary and Yugoslavia (Slavič 1921). Before the existence of this newly established border, parts of Goričko were administratively, economically, and socially connected with the town of Szentgotthárd/Monošter on the Rába/Raba river, north of Goričko and the villages around it (Slavič 1921, 1935; Šarf 1985; Kuzmič 2012). Regardless of the new border, social ties thus remained preserved across the border for some time (Ravnik 1999). Besides, the area of Goričko and the area south of the Raba river form one hilly unit in geomorphological terms. Nonetheless, negotiations about the new border there relied on geomorphology, drawing the borderline according to the ridgeline between Raba and Mura rivers, i.e., according to the streams gravitating northwards or southwards (Slavič 1921, 1935).

An important factor in negotiations about the border between Hungary and Yugoslavia was ethnicity. Borders have huge impacts on citizens' identities (Wilson and Donnan 1998), and modern states have often treated borderland inhabitants with specific care as well as mistrust, especially when people share ethnic, linguistic, and other kinds of attributes across the border. Goričko was no exception. Both Hungarians and Slovenians as modern national affiliations are the creation of the competitive nationalisms in Austria-Hungary

³ My main interlocutors were farmers. I started fieldwork in November 2017 and since made numerous, repetitive, short-term (usually one week long) visits into the area. Such a "back-and-forth" model of fieldwork practice (Brković and Hodges 2015) is a standard practice in Slovenian ethnology. I also involved students in fieldwork in Goričko, whose several tens of interviews with a wide range of people also disclosed how omnipresent the topic of wildlife is in a local context.

⁴ Yugoslavia was known by many names. To simplify, I use the name Yugoslavia for the time between the two World Wars and socialist Yugoslavia for the time after the Second World War.

in the late 19th century (Judson 2016). However, Slovenian nationalism in the Hungarian part of the dual monarchy – e.g., in Goričko – was specific, marked by the internal border. The locally existing ethnonym for the Slovenian-speaking people in the area was the Vends (cf. Bellosics 2016 [1896]), which was in national conflicts politically instrumentalized to promote Hungarian affiliation among them. At the same time, another ethnonym, the Slovenians, was promoted to engender national affiliation with the Slovenians in the Austrian part of the dual monarchy, with whom the speakers of Slovene in Hungarian lands at first did not share a national idea (Kosi 2018). The Slovenian-speaking people in the area thus sympathized with either of these exclusive visions.⁵ Moreover, the claims that Yugoslavia made on territories in the region after the collapse of Austria-Hungary were largely based on linguistic and ethnographic data (Slavič 1935: 84) that was projected onto the territory (Szilágyi 2000: 28). Experts were engaged to define areas with a presumably ethnically uniform population to determine their future in either Hungary or Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, for geostrategic reasons (cf. Szilágyi 2000), the borderline did not neatly follow this ethnic demarcation of the territory. The result was that the majority of the so-called Slovenian-speaking villages became part of Yugoslavia, with a few remaining in Hungary, and *vice versa* in the case with the so-called Hungarian-speaking villages (Ispán et al. 2018: 477).

The villages around Szentgotthárd/Monošter, which I mentioned above as being historically connected with Goričko, were the villages with Slovene-speaking populations that remained in Hungary. In Hungary, the areas of Slovenian-speakers were historically known as Vendvidék – based on the ethnonym Vend – and this name is now attributed to the villages around Szentgotthárd/Monošter. In Yugoslavia, these villages gained the name Slovensko Porabje (Hung. Szlovén Rába-vidék), which can be interpreted as the Slovenian-speaking area in the Rába basin.⁶ At the same time, a few villages became known as Hungarian minority villages in Goričko.⁷ With the new border, ethnic unambiguity thus started to be promoted in a previously ethnically complex area (Luthar 2008). Borderland inhabitants, regardless of the state in which they lived, were henceforth expected to align themselves either with the ethnic “majority” or “minority.”

This had further consequences after 1948, when Yugoslavia became an outlaw in the Soviet Union-dominated block to which Hungary belonged, resulting in the growing mistrust towards borderland populations, particularly minorities. The split led to the heavy militarization of the border as part of the so-called Iron Curtain (cf. Pelkmans 2016), especially on the Hungarian side. Although border regimes in Hungary shifted over time, the heavy guarding of the border with Yugoslavia remained present until the 1980s (Schubert

⁵ Their choice of ethnic affiliation was additionally complicated by confessional affiliations (cf. Fujs 2000: 66–67; Kuzmič 2012).

⁶ Representatives of the Slovenian minority in Hungary find the ethnonym Vend pejorative and prefer the ethnonym Slovenian instead. For this reason, they also use the toponym Szlovén Rába-vidék (Sln. Slovensko Porabje) instead of Vendvidék, which I also use in this text.

⁷ I have conducted fieldwork also in one of these villages.

2011: 52–82). Cross-border movement was discouraged, which severely encumbered the maintenance of any existing social ties between Goričko and Szlovén Rába-vidék (Ravnik 1999). Moreover, at least 68 families were resettled from Szlovén Rába-vidék to working camps in Hungary's interior between 1950 and 1953 (Munda Hirnök 2013), prompted by the suspicion that the Slavic-speaking people along the border can become Yugoslav spies (Schubert 2011: 60–62).⁸ These locally specific treatments of the border in Hungary led to a unique evolution of particular micro-regions along the border, and Szlovén Rába-vidék was such a particular case.

Asymmetrical engagements with the border on the part of Yugoslavia and Hungary also included their marking their borderlands with different material attributes (Radu 2010; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Jansen 2013). The Hungarian side was unique in this regard. One regular memory in Goričko is of the Hungarian guardian technologies, which included densely positioned control towers, minefields, barbed wire, and electric fencing (cf. Schubert 2011: 52–82). Often recited descriptions of *that* side of the border included the border being cleared of vegetation, plowed and harrowed, and with the forest behind it. The army regularly maintained the border area's ecological composition with the aid of farming machines. Plowing the soil could make footprints visible in the case of escape. The forest beyond the border functioned both to discourage escapees and to prevent a gaze onto the state. According to this description, the border was truly understood as a "curtain" on the Hungarian side.

I heard such stories about the Iron Curtain from almost every person old enough to remember it. What such narratives suggest is that the diverse materials shaping the border on each side resulted in different borderland ecologies that are still present and have left their mark on the area. Before turning to ecology as one specific material outcome of the above-presented border's "becoming" (Radu 2010), I wish to offer some theoretical clarifications on ecological and multispecies research of borders.

ANIMALS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF BORDERS

Among the predecessors of the anthropology of borders, the work of John Cole and Eric Wolf (1974) stands out for its detailed historical account on the co-dependence among ethnic boundaries, ecologies, and administrative borders, all of which are significant factors in my present account. The anthropological specialization on borders was established in the 1990s (Alvarez 1995; Donnan and Wilson 1994; Wilson and Donnan 1998; Knežević Hočevar 2000; Driessen 2002). However, these analyses did not necessarily address the ecological effects of borders. The fact that borders are an environmental factor that impact

⁸ Neighbors' mistrust towards socialist Yugoslavia and the mistreatment of Slavic-speaking ethnicities along its borders is also evident from the studies of Romanian-Yugoslav (Radu 2010) and the Italian-Yugoslav borders (Kozorog 2014).

borderlands in numerous ways was recognized early by those scholars dealing with the Mexican-US border that organized a symposium ‘Ecology and Development of the Border Region’ in 1982 (Ganster 1986). The call for the trans-border management of the environment, including surface water supplies, groundwater, air pollution, and waste, remained an important issue on this specific border for decades (Liverman et al. 1999). The Mexican-US border has also long been the site of conservation studies on trans-border ecologies and protected ecosystems (Altshul 2008: 8) as well as on the impact of border infrastructures on biodiversity and the movement of nonhuman species (Hunt n. d.). Trans-border conservation has also recently become a global topic, especially after the 2003 World Parks Congress ‘Benefits beyond Boundaries’ (Fall 2011).

Beyond applied approaches, nonhumans were considerably less present in more conceptual studies of borders. Nevertheless, the recent turn to a symmetrical treatment of human and beyond-the-human agencies (Latour 2005), and particularly to multispecies ethnography (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Kozorog 2015; Locke 2018), offer fruitful ways of exploring borders by involving nonhuman beings. According to Alan and Josephine Smart, the “impact of the movement of nonhuman life over borders” has been largely neglected in border studies so far (Smart and Smart 2016: 354), yet attention has recently strengthened because biosecurity discourse and measures have defined animals, plants, bacteria, and viruses as risks. An anthropological call for the study of such policies has been recently made by the Bewildering Boar Project (2018), which observes that the present fear of wild boars as potential virus carriers has resulted in many European states strengthening their borders against them. Yet while the concepts of risk and security have prompted innovative studies of borders, Hilary Cunningham advocates that nonhuman life should become more integrated into border studies in general because geopolitical boundaries without exception “entail ‘natural’ elements” and “cut across land-based and marine habitats” (Cunningham 2016: 375). Animals and plants are hence part of borders’ materiality; they are also cross-border migrants that affect various domains of human life and are in turn affected by human borderwork. I proceed from this proposition and present a possible approach to the study of borders by involving wildlife, which is still an underexplored topic.

Cunningham urges “border-ecology scholarship” to “stay attentive to the discursive aspects of ecological boundaries while, at the same time, take ‘matter seriously’ as a causative agent” (Cunningham 2016: 376). Such an approach seems appropriate in the case of Goričko, where wildlife regularly moves across the border and gains prominent relevance in people’s lifeways. Such a simultaneously anthropocentric (“the discursive aspects”) and anti-anthropocentric (“take ‘matter seriously’”) program, however, is challenging to complete. As Jansen (2013) elaborates, these programs are necessarily exclusive. For example, if you incorporate the actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour 2005) into an analysis of how human and nonhuman agencies assemble the specific setting of a border, you soon face troubles discussing a border as a border, because (I believe) it only exists in the human world. Therefore, as soon as humans are involved, it would be a simplification to consider

borders' materiality and symbolism as mere actants in the process of assembling the border because such a move eradicates the border's history, which informs the intersubjective relations among particular people for whom the border gains the status of truth (cf. Pina-Cabral 2014). A border hence inevitably positions humans and nonhumans in an unequal relation to itself, because the first consider it to be part of their world while the second do not. Indeed, various forms of life have their own forms of intentionality (Ingold 1994). However, only humans "develop propositional (symbolic) thinking," which makes us "capable of contemplating our position vis-à-vis the world" (Pina-Cabral 2014: 52) and hence vis-à-vis borders, which, as Jansen stresses (2013), also makes us accountable for our acts regarding borders.

In sum, we cannot simultaneously perform both analyses: the symmetrical one that treats animals and humans as equal actants and the human-centered one that finds humans as exceptional concerning borders. How then could we take wildlife's agency "seriously" and still preserve human exceptionality? The ANT has been considering animals seriously for some time: animals are actants who activate other actants, sets of relations, and network effects (Murdoch 1997). However, what happens when we include borders in ANT entanglements? One possible way – rather than understanding borders as humanly recognized demarcation lines – is to treat them as specific material and ecological compositions that mark and maintain a material and ecological difference (as in the above-presented case of Hungarian-Yugoslav border's uneven materialization of its respective sides). In such cases, animals do involve the material affordances of borders into their behavior (cf. Ingold 1994). For example, because of an ecological difference created by a border, animals may learn to migrate across it (which, as I present below, seems to be the case in Goričko). However, when animals cross the border to take advantage of both its sides, only humans perceive their behavior as border crossing. Thus, only humans get involved in borderwork, because animals without the idea of borders cannot. An analyst, therefore, is forced to jump from one framework that treats animals seriously to another that treats humans seriously, but cannot mix the two (cf. Jansen 2013). I hold to this procedure in the following ethnographic account. The final word, however, I give to humans because people often say that how a border functions is decided and organized by people, who are then also held accountable for how they do it.

THE TROUBLE-MAKING GAME AND THE ACTORS-NETWORKS IT ACTIVATES

As indicated by the conversation in the car, big herbivores are a huge topic among Goričko farmers. My older interlocutors, however, explain that wild boars, and especially red deer, were not present in their youth; their presence has a short history locally speaking. Moreover, many people claim that these animals have migrated from Hungary to Goričko after the

Iron Curtain was dismantled; the previous border regimes prevented such migration. Besides, those that live in the villages closer to the border explain that animals migrate daily, taking advantage of the uneven ecologies of the border's respective sides. Namely, the Slovenian side of the border is still very agricultural, whereas the Hungarian side was abandoned in the second half of the 20th century and is now predominantly covered with forests (cf. Ispán et al. 2018: 475). Animals thus incorporate this ecological difference into their behavior so that they find shelter on the overgrown side of the border and feed on the cultivated one. Here is an illustrative explanation of this situation by the owner of an organic and tourist farm one kilometer away from the border:

How shall I evaluate [the condition of agriculture in Goričko]? Like this: that practically of seven hectares, we harvest two, three, with wild game devastating around three hectares. Because over there, that is Hungary, and there's a lot of game. This is an area with a lot of game. If you've been following the news on TV, the problem in recent years is with these animals. It's exactly this area [that is problematic]. [...] Red deer and wild boar, you know how it is; it's normal, they come if there are only forests on the Hungarian side. From there they come to feed here. They feed here and live there, in their forests. [...] Over there [across the border in Hungary], it is, how shall I say, virtually abandoned. Many people emigrated in the past, before [during socialism], which of course means that many villages [are abandoned]. Normally, the game has peace there. It procreates there and comes to feed here.

Big herbivores thus use the distinction between the conditions in the adjoining borderlands as an affordance that makes their survival easier. Forests provide them with cover and fields with food, yet humans also notice that the two ecologies are on the border's respective sides.

In addition, professional Slovenian hunters explain the contemporary relationships between humans and wildlife in Goričko in much the same manner – that animals *feed here and live there*. On a visit to the headquarters of the Goričko hunting ground, the manager showed me an aerial photograph of the cross-border territory on which the landscape difference of the border's two sides is apparent. He commented:

What we [the hunters] here always explain, and what is also a geographical fact, is that, if we look at the structure of landscape, cultural landscape, here [he pointed on Goričko] and the structure of landscape in the Hungarian surroundings, we see that the structure here [in Goričko] is still distinctively agrarian. 50 % of the land here is forest,⁹ the other 50 % is agrarian and urban landscape, right? This is very important.

⁹ This number refers to the area where the hunting ground is situated, while the entire Goričko region has an even lower percentage of forested lands.

While here, in the Hungarian surroundings, the landscape is predominantly forested. All that's black on the map [the photograph] are forests. Forest, forest, forest, forest, forest [pointing on Szlovén Rába-vidék]. Here [in Szlovén Rába-vidék] the proportion [between forests and agrarian landscape] is probably 80 [forest]:20 [cultivated land] or maybe even more. That's 80 % of forested outskirts [beyond the border].

This difference between still agrarian Goričko and predominantly forested Szlovén Rába-vidék (Ispán et al. 2018: 481) is a historical outcome very much connected with state policies towards borderlands and ethnicity. As already observed, the construction of the Iron Curtain resulted in the special treatment of Slovenian-speaking people and the resettlement of local families from this specific section of the Hungarian borderland into the country's interior (Munda Hirnök 2013). Such harsh treatment and economic neglect of Szlovén Rába-vidék (Ispán et al. 2018: 478) accelerated emigration and the abandonment of farmlands. The ethnologist Marija Kozar-Mukič, a specialist of the area, thus observed in the 1980s: "Two-thirds of the [local] farms own less than 5 hectares of land. Besides, half of it is forest. With the agrarian reform of 1945, people did not get more [arable] land because there was nothing to be distributed" (Kozar-Mukič 1988: 137). Historically speaking, this area only ever had small amounts of cultivated land (Ispán et al. 2018: 480–481). In addition, during the socialist era, large portions of land were owned by an agrarian cooperative, which would in turn take over private lands that were abandoned because "[y]oung people were employed in industry and older ones were not able to cultivate farmland anymore" (Kozar-Mukič 1988: 137). The cooperative was afforesting the obtained fields, and this activity was quite intensive (op. cit.: 137). According to this author, who refers to the work of geographer Ludvik Olas:

To gain social security, in the villages of Szlovén Rába-vidék [...] older people would give away their land to the specialized agrarian cooperative. However, the cooperative is afforesting this farmland. Szlovén Rába-vidék is thus, according to Olas' findings, becoming a "reservation for wildlife". (Kozar-Mukič 1988: 149)

In Goričko, by contrast, the agrarian landscape historically covered more substantial portions of land than in Szlovén Rába-vidék. There was almost no industry in Goričko, and family farming persisted during the socialist period. Even when the 1971 Yugoslav legislation on decentralization stimulated the development of industry in the eastern part of Slovenia, Goričko remained almost entirely agrarian (Klemenčič 1991: 112). This history of agricultural practice served as the basis for the establishment of Goričko Nature Park in 2003, which is meant to preserve Goričko's landscape as an outcome of continuous agricultural work on small patches of diversified land (KP Goričko 2019). The area has thus largely remained cultivated by small farms, which were recently nationally recognized as a key regional feature through the park.

In such environmental conditions, big game has a good reason to migrate across the border. The historically asymmetrical treatment of the borderlands, most obviously after the 1948 split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Block, created very different ecologies on the border's respective sides, which now animals make use of. Animals do not recognize the border as such, but they do recognize the material and ecological affordances that the border has created. Crops in the cultivated fields (as an actant) attract animals to feed on them, whereas large overgrown areas (as another actant) attract them when they look for cover. As the manager of the hunting ground explained to me, animals find shelter in the Hungarian woods during the daytime. When dark falls, they feed where food is plenty and most easily accessed – that is, in the cultivated fields. Since such fields are rare in Szlovén Rába-vidék, they feed in Goričko.

By doing this, animals incorporate different actors into the network that they activate through their behavior. First of all, they involve farmers, who complain about low harvests and devastated fields. Secondly, via farmers, they also involve hunters, whose role is to estimate and reimburse farmers for the damage inflicted by animals. Animals also position hunters and farmers into a specific relationship, in which farmers are suspicious of hunters and even sometimes angry with them. Moreover, animals' unequal use of the territory also results in their including the border in the network. The border is an essential actant because, as a historical border, it has created ecological differences in the border region. As the present border, it also delimits the sovereignty of human actors from each national context.

Nonetheless, the latter border's agency only affects humans. Only humans encounter the border as an actant; animals do not. This significant distinction necessitates a shift in approach that focuses on the “problem” created by animals. Animals are indeed autonomous actors and have to be analyzed “seriously” as such, yet the outcome of their actions places them in an asymmetrical relation to humans because only humans perceive that the border is an important part of the problem.

ANIMALS COMPEL HUMANS TO NEGOTIATE THE BORDER

Turning to humans, everything presented in the previous chapter becomes part of local people's borderwork. In other words, people involved in the above-presented network of relations are ANT theorists themselves, who sketch out relations to explain what is going on. However, they also perform borderwork when they do this, for it is only through their interpretations and activities that the border is brought into existence. Animals as actants indeed stimulate such borderwork, but they do not perform it because they lack the idea of borders. Moreover, differently positioned people engage with the represented network of relations in diverse ways, which is evident from the above-sketched uneven relationships that animals activate with farmers and with hunters. They also generate sets of relations between farmers and hunters themselves. Consequently, local people perform various kinds of wildlife-related borderwork.

My account pays attention to the borderwork of people who are explicitly entangled with the local environment: namely farmers. While farmers do not comprise a homogenous group, I nevertheless find their narratives on wildlife as quite uniform, as "recitations" (Green 2012) that reproduce common knowledge through repetitive dialogues among themselves and with others that often conclude with the explanation: animals *feed here and live there*. However, these reproductions of knowledge are historically grounded. Farmers are indeed stimulated by current events related to wildlife-inflicted damage that concern their livelihood, yet farmers' talk about these events is also informed by historical experience, which renders them a unique interpretative community (cf. Pina-Cabral 2014).

The activity of borderwork contains narratives, actions, and encounters that enact a singular border in multiple realizations. An analysis thus does not start "with the border-that's there" but

directs attention to the multiple sites in which a border comes to materialize [...]. Such an approach does not suppose this 'border' to be a singular object in a singular location; nor does it assume that [...] various practices necessarily cohere, or add up to the same thing. (Reeves 2014: 54–55)

A border hence comes into temporary existence via practical enactments of and encounters with all kinds of non-living and living entities that somehow refer to a specific border and thus make this border present in people's daily lives. As observed, among Goričko farmers, big herbivores are strongly associated with the border because animals regularly cross it and thus constantly stimulate farmers' borderwork.

I became aware of this very early during fieldwork. I initially planned to study local memories of the border and farming ecologies on either side of it. However, conversations touched upon wildlife during my very first meeting with two farmers on a farm one kilometer from the border. I did not pay too much attention to these comments at first. However, after a while, they started to explain that the issue of wildlife also concerns the border. One of them described the case of his field located on the border and right alongside the forest, which extends to the border from the other side. He explained that that field was safe from animals a few decades ago because animals were few and did not approach the guarded border. Today, in contrast, big game feeds on gardens next to people's houses: *A deer can watch you in your bedroom*.

Thus many farmers explain that animals did not cross the border when guarding technologies and army members maintained a harsh border regime, which people remember quite vividly. Only later, with the dismantling of the Iron Curtain and the introduction of an open EU border, has the impact of wildlife on farming become unbearable. The border is hence narrated as having a historically protective function against wildlife, which has been transformed into a permeable site of movement (cf. Cunningham and Heyman 2004), particularly for big herbivores. Only the change of the border allowed the latter to spread

from Szlovén Rába-vidék to Goričko. Nowadays, the situation is allegedly worse in villages closer to the border, whereas farmers in villages further from the border have been facing the problem gradually, as animals spread their territory further inland year after year. I have regularly encountered such explanations.

If such talk is a form of borderwork that introduces specific notions of the border into people's minds, another kind of borderwork involves farmers' negotiations with hunters so that farmers could hunt more to keep animals away from Goričko and limit their overall numbers. Upon hearing farmers' complaints, hunters – as my above-reported experience in the hunting ground confirms – provide them with the already familiar excuse: *They feed here and live there*. Hunters agree that the number of animals has increased in the area because of the border change, but they also say that they cannot do much about it because the trouble should be solved beyond the border and the extent of their mandate. However, this complicates things further. While the explanation of the increase of big game is common to hunters and farmers, the relationship between these occupations is not one of trust, resulting in farmers further scrutinizing hunters' statements. Many farmers are suspicious that this explanation has become an excuse for inaction on the part of hunters. The first two farmers I interviewed also rejected this explanation, saying that hunters point across the border so that they can present the problem as out of their reach. Instead, they believe that big herbivores are nowadays already widespread in Goričko and that the real problem is the lack of hunting as a form of animal population control, not merely wildlife's migration across the border. Thus for many farmers, hunters perform their own borderwork as an excuse, which makes farmers truly mistrustful.

This opens another kind of engagement with the border. Farmers also believe that the ecological differences on either side of the border have become crucial to the hunting economy. On the one hand, hunters refer to the border as the limit to their power; on the other hand, they make a profit from animals that find shelter in forested Szlovén Rába-vidék and food in agricultural Goričko. Thus farmers have been discovering hunters' supposedly tactical use of the border. The ecology of the border – the uneven landscapes – provides hunters with a disposable reservoir of wildlife. Thanks to the Goričko nutritious crops, this large reservoir also includes trophy animals that are particularly attractive to hunters. Farmers maintain that hunters make good money from trophy hunt, yet trophy animals need good food, which their fields provide. At the same time, the border marks the territory of the state and thus functions as a good excuse for hunters whose wildlife management across the border is indeed limited. According to farmers, therefore, hunters refer to the border to avoid responsibility yet enjoy the economic benefits that stem from it.

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction, this kind of borderwork and the specific relationships between farmers and hunters that it engenders also shifts the focus on the state. Hunters – who also are not a monolithic group but are often perceived as such by farmers – are the agent who farmers perceive to be privileged by the state. Farmers regularly stress that the state allows arrangements that allow one group of people – hunters – to profit

at the expense of another group of people – farmers. Many think that the state allows an unfair distribution of power and resources because it gets a good share from the hunting economy. According to such claims, the state is neglecting and marginalizing the farming economy by subordinating it to the hunting economy. Farmers regularly mention that they are left to the goodwill of hunters because only hunters have the mandate to estimate the damage from wildlife. As one lady explained to me, the state makes a profit from farmers' work, albeit indirectly: farmers unintentionally feed wildlife, hunters sell access to the hunt of trophy animals to tourists, which also provides a profit for the state. As she illustratively condensed this chain of ecological and economic relations: *We feed the state!*

I believe, however, that the state is also evoked for another, historically grounded reason. In farmers' laments, the state is imagined as a distant entity that lacks responsibility towards the people in the province. It is present more as an economic entity – the tax-gatherer – than as an entity that provides equal treatment of all citizens. The latter feeling has to do with the notion of borderland and its geographical position at the margins of the state. People in Goričko often express their sense of remoteness and inequality within the national frame. The sense of neglected borderland is also present when farmers speak about their troubles with wildlife. Especially in one village on the border, people recurrently point to their status as people whose destiny is to disappear from their land and where wildlife will since rule. More precisely, these villagers recount that animals will force people to stop farming and abandon their lands and villages. They fear a scenario (albeit without the ethnic dimension) similar to the one that took place across the border in Szlovén Rába-vidék – a region with which this Goričko village historically had strong social ties.

My fieldwork initiation in this same village contained this element. I declared that part of my research interest is the future of the area and received this straightforward answer: *The only future of Goričko is wildlife*. However, lacking the necessary referential frame to understand the statement, I proceeded with questions about farming. After a while, I asked about demography and emigration from the village. Here is how they explained why many young people are leaving:

A: *The reason why everyone leaves is that they don't have anything to do here anymore. If wildlife eats everything...*

B: *Oh, yes!*

[Is this such a problem here?]

A: *It eats you all you have, the entire field.*

B: *For example, if you [go] now, in the middle of the day, you go, you can sometimes see twenty, thirty animals, a whole herd of deer comes by, and it takes everything with it. Wires and fences, everything goes down.*

Then one grabbed his cell phone and showed a photograph that he took some days ago of a herd of red deer in his field. He commented: *When they come, nothing is left*. This

statement refers not only to cultivated crops but more broadly to human life in the border region. I have heard this dramatic scenario many times in the village. Another farmer concluded our interview in this manner: *Return after a decade or so, and you'll find the place empty of people here. Only wildlife has a future here.*

Such expressions of hopelessness ascribe huge potency to wildlife, which one can interpret as part of local farmers' worldview. Namely, big herbivores do demolish fields and fences as well as diminish economic gains from farming, which turns them into a potent enemy of farmers. At the same time, I wish to stress that the expression that only wildlife has a future locally is an expression of a marginalized borderland people who feel forgotten by the state. Of course, we may assume that there are many reasons for emigration – from economic hardship to educational opportunity. However, the fact that farmers and other locals blame wildlife for emigration indirectly points to the state, because it is its responsibility to take its citizens seriously. The lament hence speaks of the state that has turned its back on the people. A look across the border, towards the forested lands of their Hungarian neighbors, tangibly convinces people that they are right about both the state treating borderland people as a marginal issue and wildlife taking over large portions of the territory. This is yet another form of farmers' borderwork.

CONCLUSION

When Jansen (2013) investigated a border in Sarajevo, he encountered a theoretical and methodological dilemma. On the one hand, many studies in the anthropology of borders promoted redirection of attention from borders-as-lines to the practices of borderwork. On the other hand, a salient theoretical stream was pushing a stance that “non-human ‘actants’ deserve equal analytical status” as humans and recognizing “a ‘flat’ social that includes human and non-human entities” (Jansen 2013: 24). He wished to meet both of these postulates but encountered a fork in the road that made it impossible to walk in both directions simultaneously. He emphasizes that “the defining disagreement at stake here is best rephrased as follows: should we start from an *analytical distinction* between human and non-human actants or not?” (op. cit.). Either accepting or denying this distinction demands incompatible approaches. Nevertheless, he found out that regarding the border, he should recognize this distinction:

Human practices could not be understood without tracing how they congealed around things (mines, barricades, a flight simulator), but *ultimately* none of these particular things were *necessary* conditions in the making of this border, while human borderwork was. (Jansen 2013: 35; original emphases)

Nonhuman actants do stimulate borderwork, yet the latter is something that only people do. Jansen discusses non-living actants, whereas my study is about animals. There is a distinction between things and nonhuman living beings concerning their relations with the surroundings and their agentive capabilities (Pina-Cabral 2014), yet I find Jansen's findings about people and things on the border compatible with findings about people and animals on the border. In Sarajevo, people attributed things with meanings and affects, which is also the case with animals in Goričko, for whom farmers have carved a specific status in their lives based on their historical experience of the border and borderland.

Still, an animal moves purposefully when crossing the border because it traces ecological affordances in its local environment that a thing does not. Nonetheless, as Jansen observes, when things are thrown or put into an environment, they do congeal people's activities around them. Thus a things-centered analysis is indeed urgent for understanding how a border is maintained. In my case, animals are those whose behavior positions differently entangled people into specific relationships with animals, with other groups of people, and with the border. Thus, I too was in favor of an ANT analysis that demonstrates how crops and forests attract wildlife for different reasons, how their use of the environment brings the issue of border to the forefront of human minds, how differently positioned people understand and deal with the "problem", and what kind of relationships this problem creates among them. Although animals with their very behavior engender sets of relations and their effects, these relations are also imbued with humanly (re)produced meanings. For example, animals are accorded diverse meanings: they are considered to be either recent historical agents, cross-border migrants, pests, trophy animals, economic opportunity, or agents of devastation. People provoked by their activities form groups of interest and distinct communities of interpretation, such as in the case of farmers and hunters. Moreover, the border also harbors meanings: it is understood as a historical change, an ecological divide, and an excuse that hunters refer to for their lack of activity – according to farmers. Borderlands are also associated with strong meanings that are sediments of history. People in Goričko, for example, do not have necessarily bad memories of their lives under socialism, particularly because socialism was much harder for their neighbors (previously their relatives) in Szlovén Rába-vidék. Yet current emigration has resulted in many empty villages in Goričko as well as a pronounced decline in farming, given that few young people decide to continue the tradition of family farming.

There are, hence, good reasons to perform both kinds of analysis on wildlife on the border, albeit separately. Nevertheless, the final analysis should recognize that human exceptionality that derives from our specific thinking (Pina-Cabral 2014) makes our accountability imperative (Jansen 2013). Farmers, for example, do not hold animals accountable for the damage they inflict, but hunters and the state, albeit as a much more abstract entity. Furthermore, they consider the state to be both distant from the borderland's problems and occasionally present for particular purposes (including taxes) (cf. Bajuk Senčar 2019). Farmers' laments about *feeding the state* and about the local future belonging to wildlife are strong expressions of vulnerability in the periphery of the state. While they perceive wildlife

in Goričko as things out of place – because if it lives there, it should also feed there – they also feel that they themselves are out of place because they do not believe the state still needs their family farming anymore, except perhaps for preserving the park’s cultural landscape.

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“TU SE HRANIJO, TAM PA ŽIVIJO” IZDELOVANJE MEJE Z DIVJADJO V SEVEROVZHODNEM KOTU SLOVENIJE

Doslej je le malo raziskovalcev v okviru večvrstne etnografije in antropologije mej preučevalo povezave med živalmi in mednarodnimi mejami, ki jih prehajajo. Res je, da so meje del in rezultat sveta človeka, a imajo v njihovem oblikovanju in vzdrževanju lahko pomembno vlogo tudi nečloveška živa bitja, ki te meje prečkajo. Vse pogosteje smo danes priče diskurzom o »invazivnih vrstah« in »biološki varnosti«, ki spodbujajo prakse »izdelovanja meje«, tj. vseh možnih oblik upomenjanja in izvajanja režimov meje. Te vrste relacije med živalmi in mejami pa antropologi tematizirajo šele od nedavnega. Ob sodobnih posthumanističnih težnjah v antropologiji, ki poudarjajo enakovredno ali simetrično obravnavo človeških in nečloveških akterjev in aktantov, se postavlja vprašanje, kako se sploh lotiti vprašanja živali in mednarodnih meja; če so živali enakovredne človeku, kot predlagajo posthumanisti, potem ni smiselno govoriti o meji, saj ta obstaja le za človeka. Avtor zato po zgledu Stefa Jansena v prvi fazi analize na podlagi akter-mrežne teorije zariše razmerja med živalmi, skupinami ljudi in mejo, v drugi fazi pa izpostavi človeško izjemnost v izdelovanju meje.

Članek temelji na etnografskem raziskovanju kmetijstva na vzhodnem Goričkem. Sogovorniki (kmetje) so avtorju pogosto pripovedovali o divjadi, ki prehaja mejo in povzroča škodo na kmetijskih površinah. Divjad ima za prečkanje dober razlog; mejo prehaja, saj sledi ponudkom v okolju, ki so rezultat ekološke razlike med ločenima stranema meje oziroma različnih režimov upravljanja obmejnih prostorov v času t. i. železne zavese. Po pripovedovanju domačinov živali izkoriščajo gozdnatost madžarskega in agrarno krajino slovenskega obmejnega prostora, ali kot

pravijo: »Tu se hranijo, tam pa živijo.« Njihovo gibanje v čezmejnem prostoru pa postavlja kmete in lovce – kot lokalno relevantni človeški skupini s posebnim odnosom do okolja – v specifično medsebojno razmerje, ki vključuje tudi njun različen odnos do meje. A čim spregovorimo o meji, se moramo od akter-mrežne teorije, ki živali in ljudi obravnava kot enakovredne aktante v mreži relacij, premakniti v analizo praks izdelovanja meje, ki človeku priznava izjemnost. V tem okviru analize postanejo meja in živali, ki jo prečkajo, družbeno dejstvo, ki reprezentira veliko več od meje same; razberemo lahko hierarhična družbena razmerja, oblike navzočnosti države in občutek marginalizacije na njenem obrobju.

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